

CHAPTER 10

EDMOND CHEVRIER, THE FRENCH NEW CHURCH HISTORIAN

It is difficult to know how to approach the subject of Edmond Chevrier and his abstruse writings after having discussed the results achieved by Le Boys des Guays. Le Boys worked ten hours a day, methodically and on a regular basis using his gold fountain pen¹ to produce his fine, narrow, and perfectly legible handwriting. He would take short breaks only to walk around his sizeable kitchen garden. On the other hand, his young friend, Edmond Chevrier, was satisfied by two or three hours' work per day and wrote in a large scrawl of almost illegible letters. Not only are there abundant spelling mistakes and very approximate punctuation, but the author's extreme nervousness appears in each line of his writing, forming an absolute contrast to Le Boys des Guays' own equanimity and resolution.

However, these two very different men were great friends and exchanged a rich correspondence during the last eighteen years of Le Boys des Guays' life.² After Le Boys des Guays' death, Edmond Chevrier continued to travel to Saint-Amand in order to see Clotilde, who carried on her deceased husband's work by opening her drawing-room to the meetings of the New Church Society in Saint-Amand until her death in 1886.³ It was

[†] Continued from *The New Philosophy* vol. 99 ns. 1 & 2 (January-June, 1996), pp. 291-340. See p. 427 (July-December, 1994) in the first installment for copyright statement and acknowledgements.

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¹ Given to Le Boys des Guays by three young English New Churchmen: Messrs. Hughes, Broadfield and Green during their visit to Saint-Amand. Dr. Bayley, *Early Worthies of the New Church*, p. 192.

² One hundred and nine letters exchanged between September 13, 1846 and September 9, 1864 plus the telegram announcing Le Boys des Guays' death (*Chevrier Collection*).

³ See the end of the chapter devoted to Le Boys des Guays.

Edmond Chevrier with whom Clotilde entrusted the precious documents which made it possible for him to write his *Histoire sommaire de la Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne*. He initially wanted to give the papers to an American Swedenborgian society but finally ended up by giving them to the Swedenborg Society in London. It was there that my friend Dennis Duckworth, then the President of the General Conference of the New Church, helped me discover them in 1964.⁴

There were, of course, several things held in common between Le Boys des Guays and Chevrier. One of these was a love of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem. Although Le Boys des Guays' faith was unwavering following his "conversion" in 1834, Edmond Chevrier took several decades to break with the Catholic religion, or so it appeared. Chevrier also felt drawn both to Protestantism, especially the Reformed Church, and to all the religions in the past as well as those in distant regions, as his writings demonstrate.⁵ The two brethren both had their Fourierist "temptation" before coming to understand that Charles Fourier's social system agreed with Emanuel Swedenborg's religious system only in a very imperfect way.⁶ Both men possessed a vast knowledge of general culture. If Le Boys des Guays could boast of having George Sand as his friend and correspondent, Edmond Chevrier could claim his neighbor, Edgar Quinet,⁷ as one of his personal friends. Chevrier, like Le Boys des Guays, was a staunch Republican to whom the idea of going into exile was not entirely unfamiliar. But what drew him to England and the United States was more a desire for religious freedom than a desire for political freedom. He ultimately broke with the pastors of the temple on the rue Thouin in Paris in order to become a member, like his wife and daughter, of a New Church congregation in London. This was one of the reasons why he entrusted the Swedenborg Society with his precious documents.

⁴ My lecture at the *Cercle Swedenborg* on December 7, 1974. In English in the *New Church Magazine*, Vol. 95, Number 675, January-April 1976: *The Chevrier Collection*.

⁵ (Edmond Chevrier), *Etudes sur les Religions de l'Antiquité*, par un Ami de la Nouvelle Eglise, Paris-Londres-New York, 1880; Edmond Chevrier, *Notice historique sur le Protestantisme dans le département de l'Ain*, Paris, Fischbacher, 1883; *Etudes sur le Christianisme primitif*, Paris, Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1896.

⁶ See quotations corresponding to Notes 9 and 11.

⁷ Letter from Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, October 20, 1860 (*Chevrier Collection*).

Edmond Chevrier, who lived in Bourg-en-Bresse, a small town not very far from Lyon, was still a medical student when his friend Abraham de la Perrière, who was also in correspondence with Le Boys des Guays, showed him a copy of *La Nouvelle Jérusalem* in 1840.⁸ Reading the journal gave him the idea of perusing Swedenborg's works. This brought about a complete change in the life of the young student, for, as he himself stated in his first letter to Le Boys des Guays, six years later:

In 1840, my mind was completely dominated by Fourier's system and the materialistic doctrines of the medical doctors in the Paris school. Now I can see the abyss into which these systems led me. Providence saved me from all these errors just in time. I thought there was no better way of bearing witness of my gratitude to Heaven than in making efforts (with all my strength) to obtain an exact knowledge of New Church doctrines and trying to shape my life according to these doctrines.⁹

It was also de La Perrière who served as a link between Chevrier and Le Boys des Guays, who, at that time, was looking for a translator of Swedenborg's scientific writings in order to complete his translation of the religious writings. When A. de La Perrière proposed that Edmond Chevrier complete this task,¹⁰ Chevrier was delighted with the opportunity of making contact with the editor of the *Journal*, which he continued to read. In the previously quoted letter he promised Le Boys des Guays that he would try to begin by translating the *Regnum animale* into French. The work was not done, even though Chevrier had Wilkinson's English version at his disposal. Nevertheless, his preliminary reading of this work allowed him to obtain a much deeper knowledge of Swedenborg's method both before and after his religious crisis. Chevrier clearly saw the difference:

I am pleased with having undertaken the translation of the *Regnum animale*. This work will be agreeable and particularly useful to me, if not useful to others. I have already perused part of

⁸ Letter from Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, October 7, 1846 (*Chevrier Collection*).

⁹ In the same letter.

¹⁰ Abraham de La Perrière to Le Boys des Guays: Beaurepaire, September 13, 1846 (*Chevrier Collection*).

the work. I observed, especially in the prologue, a general consideration on the study of natural sciences, on the objective to be reached in this study, on the method to follow in order to obtain positive results, considerations full of persistence and work in general; Swedenborg had as his purpose—through the exact knowledge of all the parts of the body and their respective functions—the discovery of knowledge of the nature and destiny of the soul. If I am right, this method is quite opposite to the spirit of his theological writings.¹¹

Thirteen years later, when Le Boys des Guays found the translation of the English liturgy made by Abbé Ledru unsatisfactory for the divine services in Saint-Amand, he asked Chevrier to translate the liturgy of the American Swedenborgians. In the meantime Chevrier acquired an edition of the liturgy from Auguste Harlé in Paris which was more recent than the one Le Boys des Guays had requested and then refused to do the work. It is true that dull work requiring considerable patience did not suit Chevrier's character. He was, more than anything, very indecisive and had very little self-confidence. In his twenty-second letter to Le Boys des Guays, he recounts that he had been ill:

I caught a cold in the rain. Took shelter with a neighbor: Unfortunately, the dressing-room was full of ladies and gentlemen whom I did not know. I did not dare get near the fire, neither to ask for dry clothes, nor leave. You can see that I have the same weakness and timorousness in small things as I have in more important matters.¹²

From a strategic perspective his timorousness fit perfectly with Le Boys des Guays' own outlook, for he feared, as I have already noted, that

¹¹Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, December 15, 1847 (*Chevrier Collection*).

¹²Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, August 14, 1856 (*Chevrier Collection*).

too rapid an establishment of the New Jerusalem in Paris would in the long run do harm to the establishment of this religion in France. Le Boys des Guays could not but approve of Chevrier's thoughts. An example follows:

I think that the unrest we feel today in France is due to a great extent to the incompatibility between the spirit of independence and radical reform that is prompting us in politics and the spirit of servitude and routine that is still dominating the old churches. The veiled hostility existing between these two principles will not be long in appearing publicly, and the time is not far off when the French will look for religious beliefs more compatible with their political ideas. Let us be ready for this day in order to be able to present a set of works which reinforce the doctrines of the New Church to those searching for religious truth, and place them within everyone's reach by means of translations and popular expositions. This is why I regard the task translating and republishing Swedenborg's works you have undertaken to be the most essential and urgent task for the moment.¹³

It is a fact that about thirty years later, Chevrier, in his *Histoire sommaire de la Nouvelle Eglise*, reproached Le Boys des Guays for being too careful about spreading and establishing the New Church in France. In Chevrier's opinion, as expressed in his work published in 1879, the New Church should have taken advantage of the good will of the Swiss minister of the Reformed Church, I.R.H. Jacquier, who was converted to the doctrines of the New Jerusalem by Richardson, a Scottish merchant who was one of the pillars of the New Church in Paris,¹⁴ and who offered Jacquier the post of minister of the New Church congregation in Paris.¹⁵ Jacquier had not been

¹³Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, September 10, 1848 (*Chevrier Collection*).

¹⁴See the chapter on the *New Church in Paris*.

¹⁵*Histoire sommaire*, pp. 194-195.

hostile to this idea when it was presented by Richardson and accepted by other New Church followers in the eighteen forties and fifties.¹⁶ Jacquier did turn down the opportunity to go to Mauritius in order to create a genuine New Church society there together with the responsibility of educating Edmond de Chazal's children.¹⁷ After having served as a pastor in Bayonne, Jacquier returned to Switzerland to become a minister in a Reformed Church parish in Vevey, where Chevrier paid him a visit, furnished with a letter of recommendation from Le Boys des Guays.¹⁸ Contrary to what has been stated Jacquier could preach the doctrines of the New Church there. But, Le Boys des Guays was not very favorable to the idea of presenting the teachings of the New Church within another church. After Jacquier's death in 1858, Le Boys des Guays had some disagreements with his widow and sons. Chevrier believed that, in general, Le Boys des Guays was too prejudiced against the members of the Reformed Church.¹⁹

In 1851, Chevrier accompanied Le Boys des Guays to London in order to attend the International Conference of the New Church. His presence at the conference was so unobtrusive that I initially thought that he had never made the journey. He later played a very active role in the free distribution of the collections of translations undertaken by Le Boys des Guays on the hundredth anniversary of the *Last Judgment*, which according to Swedenborg, took place in 1757. That same year also constituted

¹⁶ I.R.H. Jacquier, Bachelier-ès-Lettres and Bachelier-en-Théologie, defended a thesis at the University of Strasbourg on May 31, 1841: *Sur le Libre arbitre en tant qu'origine du Mal* (Free Will as the Origin of Evil). This thesis was translated into English and published in the *Intellectual Repository*, Dec. 1841, pp. 521-526. In a letter from Colonel Dupons to General de Bissy: Bayonne, April 23, 1857 (*Chevrier Collection*), we can see that, after a false rumour stating that Jacquier had problems in Vevey, Richardson and Dupons suggested to him to come and "settle down in Paris, where the need for a minister is strongly felt." Cf Jacquier to Le Boys des Guays: Vevey, January 8, 1858:

If, fifteen years ago, we had established regular services in Paris in a suitable room just for this purpose, *ad hoc*, it is very probable that the number of our brethren would be greater than it is now...If we do not take this step, our number will increase only imperceptibly. (*Chevrier Collection*)

¹⁷ In the same letter. It should be noted that, according to the *Intellectual Repository* (Jan. 1841), by that time Jacquier wanted to open a school in Paris for New Church children.

¹⁸ Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, December 15, 1852 (*Chevrier Collection*).

¹⁹ *Histoire sommaire*, p. 196.

Year One of the New Church calendar.²⁰ On this occasion, Chevrier gave advice to Le Boys des Guays concerning the various libraries to be served, both in France and abroad. I must add that this endeavor was not confined to the year 1857, but had begun as early as 1855.²¹

During the last few years of Le Boys des Guays' natural life, Jacques Matter, the Alsatian author of the *Histoire des doctrines morales et politiques des trois derniers siècles*, *Histoire critique du Gnosticisme* and a biography of Saint-Martin,²² came to Saint-Amand to prepare the publication of another biography: *Swedenborg, sa vie, sa doctrine et ses écrits*.²³ He also exchanged some letters with Le Boys des Guays and Auguste Harlé. Le Boys des Guays was greatly disappointed with the result of these contacts, but Chevrier had a better appreciation of the value of this favorable testimony from outside the circle of followers of the New Jerusalem:

I have just read Matter's work on Swedenborg, and I make haste to write to you to tell you my judgment of it. I think that people like you and me, who want to see the spread in France of truer and more correct ideas about our author, should be satisfied with this publication. In this book, everything that is related to the exposition of Swedenborg's doctrines is very mediocre, inaccurate and often quite wrong. But as far as the biographical details are concerned, we cannot but be happy to see that Matter breaks so completely with the errors that all the biographies of Swedenborg in France transmit. From this point of view, this work will have a good influence and dissipate many prejudices. We should see with great pleasure a man of such a great reputation in the scientific world as Mr. Matter confesses, and without

²⁰This is the reason for stating on the cover of the journal *La Nouvelle Jerusalem* the years: 1838-1839-82-83, etc.

²¹Les Boys des Guays to the librarians of the Royal Library in Stockholm, the library of the National Museum of History in Göteborg and the libraries of the Universities of Lund and Uppsala: Saint-Amand, August 23, 1855, as well as, on the same day, to the Secretary of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, and to Dr. Kahl in Lund.

²²Jacques Matter had three addresses: Paris, rue de Sorbonne 6; Strasbourg, rue de la Monnaie 7; and Bergheim.

²³Paris, Didier & Cie, 1863.

reserve, the truthfulness in the biographies of Swedenborg written by his followers, and also reject strenuously the accusation of madness that is still so clearly expressed in the new edition of the *Dictionnaire de la Conversation* by Firmin Didot. We should be grateful to the new biographer for the courage with which he professes his admiration for the profound genius, the noble character, and all the fine qualities that can recommend Swedenborg to the attention of historians and philosophers who are truly worthy of their titles. I also observe with pleasure, the kind manner with which he speaks of those who have received the doctrines of the new dispensation.

However, if Chevrier took such an interest in this biography, it was not solely on behalf of the community of the followers of the New Jerusalem. He continues:

I have read and reread with great attention Matter's work in order to have a clear idea of the opinion I was to present in my essay on the same subject. My conclusion is that I must reshape my work completely to give much more development and a greater precision to several areas and to try above all to insert into the biographical and bibliographical details some clear and well-defined statements of the doctrines which are presented in each passage of Swedenborg—this is Matter's weak point, the aspect I must improve upon in his work.²⁴

Thus, Chevrier chose Matter's work as a model for his *Notice* on Swedenborg, or rather as a second model, because, as he comments in the same letter, his *Notice*:

will be very much like Richer's work (*La Nouvelle Jérusalem*) but drafted in quite another way, with a constant focus of attention on that which characterizes the turn of mind of a contemporary man.

²⁴Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, July 10, 1863 (*Chevrier Collection*).

However, Edmond Chevrier, the writer, had neither Richer's style and capacity of analysis nor Matter's method and talent for presentation. But he did have other qualities. It is in his correspondence and perhaps still more in his personal notes, which were not written for posterity since some of them bear the message "To be burned before my death!" that we occasionally find the very touching thoughts of a very shy man who suffered enormously from his shyness. The fact that Chevrier accused himself of sins which in all probability were not very grave and drew the conclusion that he was "unworthy of being a pastor," reminds me of Swedenborg himself when he refused the professorship in astronomy offered him at the University of Uppsala in 1724, because of his stammering.²⁵ A quarter of a century later Matter's work was to prove useful to Pastor Décembre-Alonnier in the temple on the rue Thouin who copied whole chapters of it for his public lectures without indicating his source. It is worth noting that Chevrier became one of the strongest opponents to this pastor, who eventually submitted his resignation.²⁶

Before taking up discussion of this era, which was characterized by a very fruitful period of publishing for Chevrier, I must describe how, in 1855, at the age of thirty-seven, he confided in Le Boys des Guays by asking his advice before severing ties with his past in order to become "new," that is to say, an avowed follower of the New Jerusalem. The following extracts are taken from the letter in question:

I have often thought of consulting you about the plans I made a long time ago for leaving my country and for trying to find outside Bourg a new family, a new society, by marrying a person sharing my religious convictions.

²⁵ Letter from Emanuel Swedenborg to Erik Benzelius: Stockholm, May 26, 1724:

My own specialty has been geometry, metallurgy and chemistry, and there is a great difference between them and astronomy. It would be inexcusable for me to give up a profession in which I think I can be of good use; furthermore I have not the *donum docendi* (i.e. the gift of teaching); you know my natural difficulty in speaking; I hope, therefore, that the Academy will not recommend me... (Quoted from R.L. Tafel, Documents, Vol. I, p. 337)

²⁶Manuscript notes found in the *Chevrier Collection*: "Rue Thouin:the Humanns, Décembre. Let us not be concerned with Décembre. However, protect the good reputation of the New Church."

...I find the idea of marrying a Catholic woman more and more repugnant. But what almost insurmountable difficulties there are for me if I want to find a young person belonging, if not outwardly at least inwardly, to the New Church! But I trust in Him who governs all things in the best possible way for the least of His servants.

I will wait for another year or two, and then I will seriously devote myself to this matter, the most serious in a man's life, after the choice of a Religion. If, in your vast circle of connections with New Church members, either in France or in England, you could tell me about...a young person of a modest but honest family having received a suitable education, you would render me a very great service.²⁷

Le Boys des Guays, very touched by Chevrier's trust in him, dealt with this matter in a very serious way by proposing the names of several young girls both in France and in England. But Chevrier himself was to find his "Alba" all on his own; a woman who met all his conditions and who was so desirous of propagating the doctrines of the New Jerusalem that she continued to do so even after Edmond Chevrier's death²⁸ and who also managed to put into practice the generous principles of her faith. It is believed that both she and her daughter became nurses on the Western Front during the First World War and that after succumbing to typhus, were buried with full military honors—the Tricolor draping their coffins. This I learned from Mr. Duckworth, who had been informed of it by Miss Jessie Wynter, who knew the Chevriers well.²⁹

Like Le Boys des Guays, Chevrier was convinced of the necessity for the New Church to reject all forms of animal magnetism, somnambulism,

²⁷ Edmond Chevrier to Le Boys des Guays: Bourg, April 8, 1855 (*Chevrier Collection*).

²⁸ Manuscript notes found in the *Chevrier Collection*:

I have attained what I have wanted so much, I have in my home a small New Church society.

I have attained my ends, I have married *new*, I have a child *new* (new in English in the text).

²⁹ *The New Church Magazine*, Vol. 95, Number 675, January-April 1976: *The Chevrier Collection*.

spiritism, Cahagnet's spiritualism, etc. To Chevrier, this seemed obvious, while for Le Boys des Guays, the path toward freedom from all this mysticism was a very long one. Chevrier, in his *Histoire sommaire*, reproaches Le Boys des Guays for having taken so many months to comprehend Cheneau's true intentions.³⁰

From all this the conclusion should not be drawn that Chevrier's attitude towards Le Boys des Guays was mainly characterized by criticism and distrust. It was just the contrary; perhaps it was Chevrier's too great admiration of Le Boys des Guays and his work that had led him to discover his faults. After all, nobody is truly perfect. And it was easy to find faults with Le Boys des Guays concerning various points of detail. Chevrier understood quite well the importance of his mission and did not neglect to pay him a cordial, if not excessive, homage. Nevertheless, after having examined all the files, it is logical to wonder if Le Boys des Guays' death on December 17, 1864 did not provide some kind of relief for Chevrier. Up until that time, he had always been overshadowed by Le Boys des Guays. He now at last could begin a period of intensive publication without having to voluntarily undergo the censorship of Le Boys des Guays as the undisputed spiritual leader of the New Church in France.³¹

But if Chevrier found some relief in escaping Le Boys des Guays' censorship, it must be said that he himself subsequently assumed the role of a censor. In his *Histoire sommaire*, he very severely criticizes the publication of five volumes of extracts about the New Church translated mainly from texts drafted by Achatius Kahl. This publication took place during a period of six years (1868-1873) at Schweighauser's in Basel.³² Chevrier's criticism is partially justified, yet the selection of texts also had some

³⁰ *Histoire sommaire*, p. 203.

³¹ Cf. his outburst of temper related in Note 56 of my chapter devoted to Les Boys des Guays.

³² *Exposé de la Nouvelle Eglise suivi du Résumé des oeuvres de Swedenborg, traduit de suédois en français*, Bâle, Schweighauser,

By the same editor:

Le Nouveau Salem, 1871;

Le but de la vie humaine terrestre, 1873;

Petit Arcana Coelestia, 2 volumes, 1877-1878.

Critique by Chevrier in his *Histoire sommaire*, pp. 76-78.

merits which were not appreciated by Chevrier. The published extracts of Emanuel Swedenborg's works cannot, moreover, be denounced as evidence of a lack of orthodoxy! It is true that Achatius Kahl felt drawn to freemasonry, and it is also true that he was a great New Church historian. Chevrier knew this very well, because he had attended the International Conference of Swedenborgians convened in London in 1851, at which time public homage was paid to Kahl for this reason. In addition, Achatius Kahl appeared together with the German professor Immanuel Tafel, Le Boys des Guays and Auguste Harlé in a photograph appearing in the *Annals of the New Church*, taken during this occasion.³³

Were the reasons why Edmond Chevrier could not assume direction of the temple on the rue Thouin not at least due in part due to his lack of tolerance, his intransigence and his bad temper? Of course there was a positive side to this eternal student, this searcher for truth, this writer who wanted to make Swedenborg his foundation and the aim of all his publications, and who also tried to live according to the doctrines of the New Jerusalem, requiring much from those who, like himself, had publicly declared themselves for the New Church. It was out of modesty rather than out of any fear of public opinion, that he had signed his *Histoire sommaire de la Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne* with the anonymous phrase: "*Par un Ami de la Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne*" rather than signing his own name. Contrary to the fate of most of the followers of the New Jerusalem previously mentioned in this book, Edmond Chevrier died and was buried according to the liturgy of the New Church. His death was less unobtrusive than his life.³⁴

³³ See the chapter devoted to Le Boys des Guays.

³⁴ In addition to the works already mentioned: Edmond Chevrier, *Mélanges de Physiologie, d'Hygiène et de Médecine, dans les écrits de Swedenborg*, E. Jung-Treuttel, Librairie Chaussée d'Antin, 12. N. Minot, Rue de Sèvres, 96, à Paris et à Londres, J. Speirs, Bloomsbury Street, 36, 1876.

CHAPTER 11

THE NEW CHURCH IN PARIS

French Swedenborgianism originated in Sweden among a handful of enthusiastic followers who charged two men with the task of translating and publishing Swedenborg's works into French: Pernety, from the royal court of Frederick II in Berlin, and Chastanier, who was making preparations at the time for the founding of the Theosophical Society in London. Two of the early Swedish followers, Augustus Nordenskjöld and Charles B. Wadström had made lengthy visits to Paris, where Wadström died as an honorary French citizen.¹ Chastanier traveled to the French capital several times in 1800, mainly in order to attend, along with his German co-religionist, Heinrich von Bulow,² the worship services organized there by the Anglo-American Reverend Ralph Mather.³ In the year 1802, he attended services in the company of the three elder translators: Moët, Parraud and Daillant Delatouche.⁴

That same year, Robet Hindmarsh, the founder of the New Church in England, whose *Liturgy* had been translated into French in 1790⁵ and whose *Summary* was to be translated later on in 1820,⁶ journeyed to Paris, where he found a Swedenborgian Society of twelve people led by the

¹ See my chapter on the Early Swedish Followers.

² H. von Bulow was to leave for the United States. In 1807, he wrote, in the prison of Colberg, close to Riga, before his death the following year, his *Coup d'oeil sur la doctrine de la Nouvelle Eglise* (A Look on the New Church Doctrines), Berlin, 1819. In this work, he states that the French "will be the John the Baptists of the Lord's second advent" (pp. 62 ff).

³ C.T. Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, I:195.

⁴ See my chapter on Benedict Chastanier.

⁵ Robert Hindmarsh, *Order of Worship*, London, Hindmarsh, 1787, translated into French under the title *Liturgie ou Formulaire de Prières de la Nouvelle Eglise*, and published as an appendix to J. Clowes, *Dialogues sur la Nature, le But et l'Evidence des Ecrits Théologiques d'Emmanuel de Swedenborg*, London, Hindmarsh, 1790.

⁶ Robert Hindmarsh, *Abrégé des principaux points de doctrine de la vraie religion chrétienne*, translated from English (by Verdier, an editor in Nantes, see my chapter on Captain Bernard), Paris, 1820. In the New-Church bookshop in Sant-Amand-Montrond, there were also the *Lettres au Dr. Priestly (Letters to a Member of Parliament on the Character and Writings of Baron Swedenborg, in refutation of the calumnies of the Abbé Barruel)*. However, Robert Hindmarsh's masterpiece is the *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church*, London, Hodson & Son, 1861.

Englishman Bousie⁷ and also by the translator Parraud.⁸ To be accurate, the two men just mentioned should be counted as part of the group of twelve. We know that by this time the Marquis de Thomé had returned to the Catholic Church after having been, some twenty years earlier, first a member of the Theosophical Society in London, then the Illuminati in Avignon, and finally, the Exegetic and Philanthropic Society in Stockholm. In addition, Thomé exchanged correspondence with Charles-Frederick Nordenskjöld. Most importantly, he authored the letter published in the *Journal Encyclopédique* of September 1785, which drew attention to Swedenborg's role as a precursor in the field of magnetism, an event that Balzac was to recall in the story of Swedenborg's life told by Pastor Becker in *Séraphita*.⁹

During the Restoration, another Englishman, the elderly and wealthy J.A. Tulk, who lived in Lausanne, Switzerland, came to Paris to purchase Moët's manuscripts from his widow. A transaction took place and Tulk began at once, assisted by Verdier, Parraud and others,¹⁰ to prepare another edition of Swedenborg's works in eight volumes between 1819 and 1824 in Paris and Brussels. Tulk devoted 27,000 Francs in currency of the time to this endeavor,¹¹ thus providing Captain Bernard and the other propagators of the New Jerusalem with a rich collection of Swedenborg's Writings. Bernard first organized meetings at the home of Lawyer Gobert in 1820, and returned there again in 1826, especially to convert Abbé Cegger, the grand vicar of Notre-Dame. Cegger, who was entrusted by his church superiors with the task of looking into the ongoing séances of animal magnetism, etc., in the French capital, was immediately won over to the camp of the adversaries.

By 1826, a total of fourteen members belonged to Gobert's group.¹² This was six more than the number that gathered together during Bernard's first stay in Paris in 1820.¹³ Around this time Mme. Gobert, a somnambu-

⁷ See my chapter on the Illuminati in Avignon.

⁸ C.T. Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, I:195.

⁹ See my chapter on Benedict Chastanier and my article in the *Année balzacienne 1966: Le "swedenborgisme" balzacien*, p. 34.

¹⁰ See my chapter on Moët's translations.

¹¹ C.T. Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, I:321.

¹² *Ibid.*, I:328.

¹³ Dr. Bayley, *New Church Worthies*, London, James Speirs, 1884, pp. 183-184.

list, received a message from the spiritual world discouraging the group's activities, including its meetings and publications. Dr. Brunet, a doctor from Nantes residing in Paris,¹⁴ a friend of Richer and L.F. de Tollenare and the translator of the *Dictionnaire des Correspondances*, the author of a *Notice de Swedenborg* and "many manuscripts dealing with ecstasy, dreams,"¹⁵ was not convinced by this message. Proof of this is found in Brunet's letter of January 20, 1827, to Edouard Richer:

You asked me about the state of the New Jerusalem in Paris. I think that M. Bernard would have been able to give you some information on this subject. But here is my opinion: as far as I know, the church was composed of about a dozen people at the most before the arrival of the 23rd Regiment. Since then, about half a dozen of brethren have joined us, I believe. Before their arrival, we sometimes gathered together with M. Gt, a lawyer, but about that time, they claimed that the authorities would be alarmed, etc. To be candid, I think that the revelations made by somnambulists to M. B(ernard) were in harmony with this opinion;¹⁶ thus, it is true that, since then, we do not meet and there is a division between the brethren due to the séances of magnetism among some and the inclinations of others among us toward writing and making the most of the doctrines. This is the very truth.¹⁷

¹⁴ First at 17, Faubourg St-Germain, then at 17 rue St-Maur.

¹⁵ L.F. de Tollenare to Le Boys des Guays: Nantes, April 27, 1838 (*Chevrier Collection*): "Dr. Brunet is no longer in this world. He died in Brest from the cholera in 1832."

¹⁶ Cf Bernard to Blanchet: Paris, May 30, 1826 (*Chevrier Collection*):

Our dear sister Gobert gives us very valuable advice on this matter; she also has, above all, the gift of discerning from outset the moral and spiritual frame of mind of those who are introduced to her, which is of great importance for the newly formed Church and has already protected us several times from unnecessary and dangerous relationships.

In the same paragraph:

...although everything has been prepared, the circumstances are still not very favorable...we must wait with resignation and be utmostly cautious in our relationships and work, and even avoid gathering together on a given day, and we cannot still think of establishing regular services or of publications that will be useful later on.

¹⁷ *Chevrier Collection*.

Thus this ecstatic, this admirer of the faith healers Sirot¹⁸ and Chambellan,¹⁹ who had probably attended the activities of the group which met together with Lawyer Gobert and his somnambulist wife, or who at very least exchanged letters with Abbé Egger, disapproved of the séances of magnetism under the leadership of Captain Bernard or General de Bissy. Both Bernard and de Bissy as well as the printer Servier, who was another great friend of Edouard Richer's, frequented the circle of Monsier and Madame Gobert. There also was a gentleman named Pagole, of whom I know nothing except for the fact that, upon the occasion of the Reverend Smithson's visit to Paris from England, Pagole joined him for dinner together with Gobert, Servier, and Dr. Brunet.²⁰ In the same year, 1827, Augustus Tulk paid a visit to Gobert's home. Dr. Brunet, having assisted with the revision of the *Arcana Coelestia*²¹ whose publication was financed by Tulk, refers to this visit in a letter to Edouard Richer, in which he is sympathetic to the Englishman's position of regretting the practices of magnetism and mysticism that characterized the Paris group at that time.²² But, as I have previously stated, Dr. Brunet himself was enticed by these practices. But in taking all things into consideration, compared with Captain Bernard and Général de Bissy, or even Abbé Egger and the Goberts, Brunet could pass as an "orthodox" Swedenborgian.

Gobert and Bernard both died in 1826. At that time, Dr. Brunet's professional failure in Paris was so severe that he felt obliged to borrow "about one hundred écus"²³ and even offered on several occasions to sell his own copies of Swedenborg's works to the Library of Nantes.²⁴ Thus it was not he who brought about the liaison between Gobert's group and

¹⁸ Brunet writes his name each time as Sirop.

¹⁹ Brunet to Edouard Richer: Paris, December 23, 1828 (*Chevrier Collection*). In this letter, Dr. Brunet expresses his admiration for Chambellan and his doubts about Mme de Saint-Amour's curing gifts.

²⁰ Bernard to Blanchet: Paris, August 9, 1825 (*Chevrier Collection*).

²¹ Bernard to Blanchet: Tours February 9, 1825 (*Chevrier Collection*): "The doctor had also translated Robert Hindmarsh's: *Key of Numbers, and their Spiritual Meaning in the Word of God* into French."

²² Edouard Richer to Servier: Nantes, January 20, 1827 (*Chevrier Collection*).

²³ Brunet to Richer: Paris, October 8, 1828 (*Chevrier Collection*).

²⁴ Brunet to Richer: Paris, January 20, 1827 and July 29, 1828 (*Chevrier Collection*).

Swedenborgianism in Paris in the eighteen thirties, but rather the Abbé Egger. Egger, after “an ecstatic sleep in which he received all the proofs of the existence of the world of spirits as described by Swedenborg” (see footnote 23), and after the publication of his *Manuel de religion et de morale* (dedicated to the Duchess of Orleans),²⁵ his *Vrai Messie*, followed by his *Letter to Messrs. Rotschild and their Co-religionists on the “Vrai Messie” and the Language of Nature*²⁶ and his *Essay on the Dictionary of the Language of Nature*²⁷—all exegetic works using the science of correspondences founded by Swedenborg—next turned to the practical aspects of establishing the New Church in France. This effort included Emile Broussais, a lawyer who was the son of the celebrated professor of medicine, whom he converted to the doctrines of the New Jerusalem. The conversion, which took place in 1830,²⁸ had an impact on the future of the New Church in France. Broussais and Egger asked jointly for grants from the London Swedenborgians, a request that was at first rejected or rather ignored, as I have noted in another study.²⁹

Broussais’ consecutive addresses (5, rue d’Enfer then 11, rue Notre-Dame des Champs) were certainly important, not only in the eyes of the London Swedenborgians who decided to give their financial support, but also because of the close proximity to Mme. de Berny, which led to Balzac’s becoming aware of Emile Broussais’ efforts to spread the doctrines of the New Jerusalem.

The association between Egger and Broussais together with their individual perceptions of Swedenborg’s ideas affected the New Church in France in two ways. On one hand, there was a flavor of Catholicism, which can best be seen in the liturgy translated from English by Ledru which I have previously discussed in my chapter devoted to Le Boys des Guays;

²⁵ Paris, 1829.

²⁶ *Le Vrai Messie ou l’Ancien et le Nouveau Testament examinés d’après les principes de la langue de la Nature*, Paris, Felix Loquin, 1829.

²⁷ Paris, 1829.

²⁸ *The Intellectual Repository and New Jerusalem Magazine*, January 1831, p. 341. For further information about Abbé Egger’s role in the establishment of the New Church in France, see my chapter on Captain Bernard and his Friends, and Auguste Viatte’s study published in the *Revue de Littérature comparée 1931: Les swedenborgiens en France de 1820 à 1830*, pp. 420-426.

²⁹ *L’Année balzacienne 1966*, p. 36.

for example, the worship of Mary, the word “vous” instead of “tu” when speaking to the Lord, retaining Holy Water and confession, and communion in one kind. On the other hand there was a touch of religion of state that I mention in my chapter on Balzac’s “Swedenborgianism.”

Even if it is true, as Broussais claimed in his second letter to his English co-religionists, that he had about forty disciples,³⁰ a figure which increased to “about one hundred” a year later,³¹ and “many priests” who required a catechism from him in order to teach the doctrines of the New Church in their parishes, the situation was not so optimistic in reality. Broussais, “the only one chosen by God for the establishment of the New Church in France,”³² who gave himself the title of Prime Minister of the New Church in France³³ did not hesitate to react strongly when Le Boys des Guays made his announcement of the inauguration of worship services to the Mayor of Saint-Amand-Montrond in November 1837.³⁴ Neither was he hindered from his attempts to publish his *Régénération du Monde! Apologie pour la dernière dispensation divine et la Nouvelle Eglise adressée aux vrais représentants des la France nouvelle, parti sans actifs et généreux de toutes les réformes désirables et possibles de la régénération de la croyance et des moeurs de l’Eglise et de l’Etat.*³⁵ even after having been abandoned by all his New Jerusalem disciples because of his extravagant ideas, and having wasted, by his own account, the 40,000 Francs that his co-religionists had entrusted to him for the construction of a chapel in Paris.³⁶

In the summer of 1838, an Englishwoman living with Mme. Thiébault in Versailles was converted by Abbé Egger. She, in turn, converted her compatriot, the Countess De la Taille des Essarts. A service of worship under the leadership of the English Reverend Bayley, brought together the

³⁰ Letter of August 1, 1833 according to Volume VIII (1834-1835) of the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, p. 237, information drawn from the *Intellectual Repository*, which had also published the English translation of Broussais’ first letter, dated December 8, 1830.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

³² de Fossa to Le Boys des Guays: Salon, March 6, 1838 (*Chevrier Collection*).

³³ Hartel to Le Boys des Guays: Paris, March 26, 1838 (*Chevrier Collection*).

³⁴ See my chapter on Le Boys des Guays.

³⁵ *Regeneration of the World*. Paris, Leroi, 1842.

³⁶ C.T. Odhner, *Annals of the New Church*, I:466.

Hartels, Eugène Rollet, Miss Strutt and several other British citizens.³⁷ After this service, a new society of the New Church was founded, whose meeting place was the Hartels' residence at 36, rue du Mail, which also served as the Paris depository of the New Jerusalem Bookshop in Saint-Amand-Mont-Rond. Hartel, like Le Boys des Guays, had fought in war under Napoleon and became a sort of a New Church jack-of-all trades in the Paris region. I found in the *Chevrier Collection* forty-three letters in Hartel's handwriting which had been sent to Le Boys des Guays recounting his joys and sorrows up to the time of his death, in 1848. Afterwards, his widow settled in Saint-Amand to live out the rest of her life in the community established by Le Boys des Guays.

Above all, what characterized the new Paris Society was its strict orthodoxy. It broke away from Emile Broussais' eccentric behavior and denounced Constant Cheneau's unreasonable demand to have his name on the frontispiece of the temple planned in Saint-Amand in a declaration called "Statutes," which contained two manuscript pages signed A. Caudron, Hartel, Courvoisier, H.E. Moison, A. Richardson, Alphonse Mallet, dated August 2, 1840.³⁸ Eventually the new society turned away from the activities of the group that met with Gobert in the 1820s and rejected the idea of giving his widow a grant. Hartel wrote to Le Boys des Guays, "She never has been considered a member of the New Church."³⁹

Another characteristic of the Paris Society, which will not come as a surprise to an attentive reader of this work, was its international nature. The English Reverend Bayley, who came to attend Divine Worship, together with the Hartels, clearly noted this aspect: "There were about twenty persons present, representing, if I recollect correctly, fourteen nationalities."⁴⁰

But did those who signed the "Statutes" really want to reject the past and break away from pseudo-Swedenborgianism? A. Caudron was the friend who had lent Le Boys des Guays a copy of the treatise on *Heaven and Hell* in the autumn of 1834. Courvoisier, who lived at 290 Chaussée des

³⁷ Hartel to Le Boys des Guays: Paris, October 24, 1841 (*Chevrier Collection*).

³⁸ *Chevrier Collection*; See the chapter on Le Boys des Guays.

³⁹ Hartel to Le Boys des Guays: Paris October 10, 1841 (*Chevrier Collection*).

⁴⁰ Dr. Bayley, *New Church Worthies*, London James Speirs, 1884, p. 196.

Martyrs in Monmartre, was an old friend of Broussais⁴¹ and was entrusted by L.F. Tollenare with the responsibility of taking care of Moët's manuscripts, which at that time were in the hands of the Chevalier de Birague.⁴² H.E. Moisson had also known Broussais, and was in touch with the English Reverend Sibly. He paid a visit to Le Boys des Guays in 1840, with whom he maintained a correspondence,⁴³ and with whom he also attended the New Church International Conference in 1851. A. Richardson was a Scottish merchant who had been in Paris for fifteen years without having any contact with any of Swedenborg's followers until he became acquainted with Hartel in 1840, thanks to Le Boys des Guays' *Journal*. Richardson converted Pastor Jacquier, a member of the Swiss Reformed Church, to the doctrines of the New Church, which he was to preach for the remainder of his life as a Calvinist minister.⁴⁴ Richardson had hoped to make Jacquier a minister in the New Church in Paris. He organized meetings in his home and also received the Swedish Anna-Fredericka Ehrenborg in his large family when she came to Paris in 1855.

Baron Alphonse Mallet was a close relative of Frédéric Portal, Le Boys des Guays' collaborator for the journal *La Nouvelle Jérusalem*. Like Le Boys des Guays, he was enamored of hieroglyphics and was a member of the committee to publish Champollion's works.⁴⁵ Mallet holds the record for longevity as a French New Churchman; having signed the "Statutes" in 1838, he was still in correspondance with Mme. Chevrier at the beginning of the next century.⁴⁶

This leaves Auguste Harlé, a young painter, who in 1840 at the age of thirty-one was converted by his cousin Frédéric Portal, as was Baron Mallet. Harlé, who began his Swedenborgian career by drawing, according to Hartel's premonitory dream,⁴⁷ the temple that was never built in Saint-Amand. He became Le Boys des Guays' most faithful collaborator.

⁴¹ Hartel to Le Boys des Guays: Paris, March 26, 1838 (*Chevrier Collection*)

⁴² L.F. de Tollenare to Le Boys des Guays: Nantes, September 16, 1836 (*Chevrier Collection*).

⁴³ Six documents in Courvoisier's handwriting in the (*Chevrier Collection*).

⁴⁴ See the chapter on Chevrier.

⁴⁵ *La Nouvelle Jérusalem*, tenth year (1847), p. 143.

⁴⁶ *Chevrier Collection*.

⁴⁷ See the chapter on Le Boys des Guays.

Harlé accompanied him to the New Church International Conference in London in 1851, assisted him as a Hebraist in publishing his last work, the *Index général des passages de la Parole*, published his uncompleted *Index méthodique des Arcanes Célestes* and above all, went into debt for five years in order to purchase Le Boys des Guays' translations from his heir. Le Boys des Guays had foreseen a sixth volume of the *Mélanges* composed of texts by Auguste Harlé,⁴⁸ the fifth volume being reserved for Frédéric Portal, who, although not among the signers of the "Statutes," had provided the Paris group two excellent members by having converted both Baron Mallet and Auguste Harlé to the doctrines of the New Jérusalem.⁴⁹

Nevertheless Auguste Harlé's successive dwelling places (12 rue Blanche, 3 or 4 rue d'Aumale,⁵⁰ 32 rue de Bruxelles) were suitable neither for the services nor as a depository for books. The members of the Paris New Church society gathered together at the home of Monsieur Minot, 7 rue Guénigaud. M. Minot became a receiver of the doctrines after having read Balzac's *Séraphîta*.⁵¹ Anna Frederika Ehrenborg, who attended worship services several times during her stay in Paris during the summer of 1855, tells us about the society in her description of her second visit to Minot's on July 15, 1855:

For the second time I attended the Sunday meeting at Mr. Minot's. The four staircases were rather difficult to climb, reminding me of the first meetings of the Christians in the catacombs, in thick woods and other places well-hidden from the world and persecution. — Probably, the New Church in France, in proportion to the

⁴⁸ Le Boys des Guays to Chevrier: Saint-Amand, June 29, 1864.

⁴⁹ Le Boys des Guays to Chevrier: Saint-Amand, April 29, 1864 (*Chevrier Collection*). It should be noted that, in the two letters mentioned, Le Boys des Guays makes a proposal to Chevrier to supply texts for a volume of *Mélanges*. But as Frédéric Portal states so well in a letter to le Boys des Guays, dated Paris, December 20, 1838: "If my contributions could be of some use for the publishing of your *Journal*, I would be happy to send you some articles, but what we are lacking is readers, not authors."

⁵⁰ Anna Frederika Ehrenborg, *Tjugofyra Bref från Frankrike, Tyskland och Sweits* (Twenty-four letters from France, Germany and Switzerland) 1855-56. The first part, Uppsala, Wahlström & Cie, p. 187 states: "Rue d'Aumale no. 4". but in his letter to Chevrier dated June 6, 1855 (*Chevrier Collection*) Le Boys des Guays says, "I stayed with our brother, M. Harlé, no. 3 Rue d'Aumale."

⁵¹ Anna Frederika Ehrenborg, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

population, has even fewer members than we in Sweden, but those few seem to be more fervently attached to it. As for us, I am not aware of any place where people meet for this purpose. There were not very many present this time also...Today they read besides the Ten Commandments and the Lord's prayer, Corinthians II;9, Jonah 1, Psalm 50, and Matthew 23. But there was no sermon, nor any other explanation than a brief summary of the spiritual meaning according to Swedenborg.⁵²

Among those present were Mr. Richardson, and an American couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ford, who later took their Swedish co-religionist to the home of Countess Thiébault, the organizer of services of New Jerusalem divine worship in English every Sunday in Versailles. Also present at Minot's was the Countess de la Taille des Essarts, and another Englishwoman whom Mrs. Ehrenborg had previously met together with her husband at the International Conference in 1851. In the eyes of the Swedish observer, if the divine service at Minot's "lacked ceremony," Mme. Thiébault's service "had too much ceremony" in following the liturgy of Dr. Bateman's congregation in London.⁵³

M. Minot was assisted in Paris by M. Dormont, who was according to Anna Frederika Ehrenborg, "an old man" who had gone from reading Boehm's works to Swedenborg's treatises, of which he owned all the religious and scientific works in several languages, except the Latin version of *Regnum animale*.⁵⁴ The primary minister in the services at Minot's was Dr. Poirson, a man whose eccentricities Chevrier denounced, yet he seemed to have had a strong influence on members of the group for more than twenty years.

Le Boys des Guays, traumatized by the unhappy experiment with the uncompleted temple in Saint-Amand, feared that a similar undertaking in

⁵² Anna Frederika Ehrenborg, op.cit. p. 62.

⁵³ Anna Frederika Ehrenborg, op.cit. p. 84.

⁵⁴ Anna Frederika Ehrenborg, op.cit., p.64. In the *Chevrier Collection* there are fourteen letters in Dormont's handwriting sent to Le Boys des Guays during the years 1847 to 1855. Chevrier's note on the first of these letters: "To be burned. No." Dormont's address: 8, rue des Bouronnais.

Paris would destroy his spiritual work in establishing the New Church. The future was to prove that he was not wrong.

At first things seemed to have gotten off to a good start. Miss Holmes, a Franco-American New Churchwoman, dissatisfied with the pseudo-secret service ministered by Dr. Poirson, contacted the Reverend Chauncey Giles in Philadelphia, asking for his assistance in creating a form of public worship. One year later, in 1878, Giles accompanied Miss Holmes to France in order to get an idea of the state of the New Church in Paris before taking any concrete action. I must add that before he embarked for France, he had appealed to the President of the United States, who, through the American Ambassador in Paris, recommended M. Mercère, Minister of Ecclesiastical and Public Instruction as one who might give a favorable reply to the request by the members of the New Church in Paris for the official authorization to organize public meetings for the purpose of spreading the doctrines of the New Church.

When this authorization was granted, following the usual inquiry by the Prefect of Police, Chauncey Giles paid a visit to Dr. Poirson in order to attend a service conducted by him. The following is the description made by Giles in his private diary:

In the afternoon we went to hear Dr. Poirson at his home. The service is held in the fourth story in a little room which could barely hold twenty people. The floor is of brick with a rug covering the middle. On one side are bookcases filled with books and other literary matters. On the other side is a painting of the nude figure of a girl.

The service seemed very long and tedious.

Mrs. H. — was baptised by Mr. Benade, who read the service in French. Then Dr. Poirson read a chapter in Isaiah and gave the spiritual meaning. He then read from a work on "Symbolism of the Eastern Mythology." Mr. Benade followed with a prayer which ended the service.

The prospects of the New Church certainly do not look very bright: But the Lord has care of his Church...⁵⁵

Chauncey Giles feared the meeting with Dr. Poirson, who together with his qualities as a propagator of New Church doctrines, represented a return to the time of Captain Bernard, Emile Broussais and Constant Cheneau. Giles advised Miss Holmes, who by then had become Mme. Humann, having recently married an Anglo-French lawyer, to ally herself with Chevrier and Baron Mallet, whom he had met in London and whose dedication he had appreciated. Giles could not have known that Edmond Chevrier, after having nearly proposed marriage to Miss Holmes, could no longer stand the woman.⁵⁶

The future was to reveal that Mme. Humann was a very bad-tempered woman, but one who had the determination to accomplish whatever endeavor she undertook. Thus, five years after having obtained the authorization to hold public meetings for the purpose of teaching the doctrines of the New Church, a period during which M. and Mme. Humann held meetings in their villa in Meudon-Bellevue, Mme. Humann bought a house at 12, rue Thouin, behind the Pantheon. This she did in order to install the temple of the French Society of the New Church, a library, and depository for books, as well as an apartment for herself and her husband. So, in a period of just five years, an energetic woman succeeded in accom-

⁵⁵ It can be seen from the description of the place of worship, that the services were held with M. Minot, and not with Dr. Poirson. Mme. H.—was Mme. Humann, whose maiden name was Miss Holmes. Pastor Benade was another American New Church pastor who, in traveling through Paris on the way to Egypt in order to study hieroglyphs, left his wife and daughter there.

⁵⁶ Chauncey Giles to Miss Holmes: Philadelphia, March 7, 1877: "I saw M. Chevrier when I was in England and was much pleased with his appearance, and though I could not talk with him, I have sometimes thought that he might be a good man to succeed M. Harlé" (Carrie Giles, *op.cit.*, p. 281.).

Chauncey Giles to Mme. Humann: Philadelphia, June 19, 1879: "I am pleased to hear that M. Mallet and M. Chevrier have offered to help you."

Manuscript notes by Edmond Chevrier in the *Chevrier Collection*: "I. Be content with one's lot. Appreciate the goods you have. I have sufficient fortune and what a wife—my heart rejoices thinking that I could have married Holmes (horror)...what danger I escaped by not asking Miss Holmes in marriage in April 1869, in Paris."

plishing what New Church men had not been able to achieve in a century of French Swedenborgianism. And the temple was not empty. Up to two hundred people attended services of divine worship, half of whom partook of the Holy Supper. Mme. Humann conducted a Sunday school with about forty children and also organized the women in the area into sewing circles to make clothes for the poor. Every day there were visitors to the library.

I found this information in the *Eglise de l'Avenir*, the New Jerusalem monthly appearing between October 1892 and May-June 1898. Mme. Humann's important work was completed by the publication of this journal, whose longevity, as a point of fact, was briefer than Le Boys des Guays' *La Nouvelle Jérusalem*. The first issue began with a quotation from *Divine Providence*:

It was provided that, among the *Roman-Catholic populations*, there was a nation which was not subjected to *sacerodotal domination* and which considered the Scriptures as holy; this noble nation is the French nation.

In the first three pages of the journal we find a declaration of purpose. *The Church of the future* is, of course, the *New Church* revealed by Swedenborg in the eighteenth century. Next there is a six page *Summary of New Church Progress in the World* ending with a request made by Mr. Hayes, the President of the United States, to the French government requesting official authorization to conduct New Church worship in France. The author, M. Humann, reminds us that the modest center located first at Minot's on the rue Guénigaud, then to the "rue de la Faisanderie, and then to the rue Sommerard, where there was a depository for Swedenborg's works, a reading room and a circulating library," had been replaced by "the first temple erected in Paris for public New Church worship, located at number 12, rue Thouin, behind the Pantheon. A bookstore and a free library are annexed to the Temple."

But the most important paragraph of this New Church journal, between the letter on magnetism sent by Marquis de Thomé to the *Journal Encyclopédique* in 1875 and the opening of the temple on the rue Thouin, is

the one dealing with the organization of the two societies created for the purpose of spreading the doctrines:

Some New Church members who are regular attenders of the services organized every Sunday at three o'clock in the afternoon in the Temple, rue Thouin, have decided to form two Societies, each with the aim of spreading the doctrines of the New Church; one by means of the press and the other by means of God's Word. The name of the first society is "Société Biblique de la Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne, dite New Jerusalem," which is identical to the Société de la Librairie Swedenborgienne annexed to the Temple. It proposes to:

I. Examine the means of making possible the publication of a Bible in French whose translation will be more literal than former translations of the Bible in order to facilitate the study of the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures.

II. Reprint the exhausted French translations of Emanuel Swedenborg's works and also publish the short treatises considered useful for the spreading of the doctrines.

III. Edit the *Journal de la Nouvelle Jérusalem*.

The other Society was called the "Société française de la Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne, dite Nouvelle Jérusalem." It proposes to:

I. Provide for the maintenance of the Temple at rue Thouin, and for the construction of other places for Divine services depending on need, and to spread the doctrines throughout France.

II. Provide for the support of the ministers and lecturers who do the work of evangelization.

This organization which was built on the model of the Saint-Amand society with its New Jerusalem Bookstore as an independent enterprise, or

on the model of the General Conference with the Swedenborg Society for the purpose of printing and publishing the works, had been preceded by a circular letter containing the Statutes of the French New Christian Church Society, called the New Jerusalem together with the composition of the Steering Committee. When on January 6, 1889, Edmond Chevrier received the undated letter signed Ch. and L. Humann, his reaction was quite negative. And furthermore it can be seen from his manuscript notes that form the outline of his *Mémoires inachevés*⁵⁷ that although he had gone to England together with his wife and daughter to take Holy Supper in a London congregation of the General Conference after having attended the services on rue Thouin, he still considered it to be his duty to continue to go to the temple in Paris in order to meet English and American Swedenborgians, despite his having broken with the Humanns.⁵⁸

It should be noted that Mme. Humann no longer needed Chevrier. While the Swedenborgian group in Paris had previously suffered from a lack of pastors, the temple behind the Pantheon had an excess number of them. This paradoxical situation can partly be explained by the way in which pastors chosen by the new society were ordained. As early as in 1877, Chauncey Giles, the pastor from Philadelphia who had assisted Mme. Humann in obtaining the official authorization of the French government to publicly profess the doctrines of the New Jerusalem and to prepare the inauguration of new worship, first at the Humann's home and then in the temple which he himself dedicated in 1883, told the then Miss Holmes that he did not trust self-taught pastors.⁵⁹ It was Mme. Humann and her friends who decided that the oldest follower in Paris, M. Bertheau, who was also much criticized by Edmond Chevrier, was to have the right to ordain a pastor by merely placing his two hands on the candidate's

⁵⁷ Chevrier Collection.

⁵⁸ In chapter II, Part VII of his *Mémoires* bearing the title *De mes rapports avec la Société de la rue Thouin*, containing not less than one hundred sheets of 18 x 23 cm + twelve notes of different sizes, Chevrier states his:

- I. Motives for attending the services at rue Thouin;
- II. Motives for breaking with the worship at rue Thouin;
- III. That our aim should still be the same after breaking with the worship at rue Thouin: attend the New Church services; be confident.

⁵⁹ Carrie Giles, op. cit., p. 281: "I have not much confidence in self-appointed ministers or teachers."

shoulders, thus excluding any other form of sacerdotalism. It was in this manner that M. Bertheau ordained Charles Humann, a lawyer of the bar in Paris, as a minister of the worship of the New Jerusalem.

Now this choice was not a poor one. A reading of Charles Humann's three publications, whose titles appear in the catalogue of the library of rue Thouin, reveals an author who had read Swedenborg with profit and who was free from all the aberrations of interpretation so frequent with French Swedenborgians. The first of these books: *La Nouvelle Jérusalem; Ses principes et leurs applications sociales*, includes a short review of Swedenborg's religious writings and outlines the history of the New Church in the world, in anticipation of his second book: *L'Évangile social*, which gives application of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem to the modern world. In his third book: *Le Nouveau Testament, Mattieu, Marc, Luc et Jean*, Charles Humann arranged the texts of the Holy Bible so that they would be adjacent to their internal meaning according to the Science of Correspondences revealed by Swedenborg. Unfortunately, Charles Humann suffered from a terrible throat disease which hindered his ability to speak in public. Now the rue Thouin society had two other ministers: Charles Nussbaum and J. Décembre. Nussbaum, a former tutor of the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand who was assassinated in Sarajevo, translated into French Dr. J. Ellis' work *Doubt and Revelation*, a pamphlet intended to be distributed to all the pastors of the Reformed Church in France. He then left for the United States to be ordained a minister of the General Convention of the New Church. Afterwards he planned to return to Paris to accomplish his ministry in conjunction with the Humann's. However, as I have previously mentioned, the New Churchmen in Paris had their own particular ideas about this and did not want a pastor imposed on them from the outside. Ultimately Charles Nussbaum ended up in Mauritius where he served as a pastor between 1914 and 1922.⁶⁰

As far as Décembre is concerned, he assisted Charles Humann in his ministry and was referred to as a "pastor" by the time the first issue of the *Eglise de l'Avenir* appeared. With the Humann's approval, he went to

⁶⁰On several occasions I met Mrs. Williams, Eastbourne, Charles Nussbaum's third wife. She was much younger than her husband who died in 1923 and did not know Paris very well.

Switzerland where he was ordained a minister in the General Convention by its local representative, the Reverend F. Görwitz. However, Décembre had certain peculiarities. Among those whom he admired were not only Le Boys des Guays, Auguste Harlé, (who had died in 1879 and was replaced by his son Jean-Auguste Harlé, a publisher of translations), but also Emile Broussais.⁶¹ As the chairman of the French Association of Writers, Décembre gave many public lectures. As far as the lectures are concerned, I have been able to verify that he stole systematically from Jacques Matter, repeating word for word whole chapters of his *Swedenborg, sa vie, sa doctrine et ses écrits*.⁶² To the visitors coming to the temple on rue Thouin, among whom was August Strindberg,⁶³ he declared frankly that he did not believe everything that Swedenborg reported in his works. He certainly had other weak points, some of which received harsh criticism in the American publication *New Church Life*. Initially his congregation defended him, but eventually he was asked to resign as pastor.

When Charles Humann died in 1879, Mme. Humann had her son Charles read the sermons since Charles Nussbaum was not considered to be a desirable pastor. Although Charles had been baptized by Chauncey Giles, the President of the General Convention of the New Church,⁶⁴ his life, according to Pastor F.C. Mercanton,⁶⁵ differed greatly from his parents' life based on religious principles. Instead of helping his mother continue her work, he obliged her to sell the house on rue Thouin so that he could pay off his debts.

Although the temple was eventually re-purchased some twenty years later, thanks to an important bequest made to Mme. Humann by a very wealthy French-American woman,⁶⁶ the religious role played by the rue Thouin had come to an end. Mme. Humann's involvement with her

⁶¹ *L'Eglise de l'Avenir*, Sixième Année, No. 67-68, pp. 323-324.

⁶² See the chapter on Le Boys des Guays.

⁶³ *Swedenborg i Paris* (Article by August Strindberg published in the student magazine *Holmnia*, Uppsala, 1898).

⁶⁴ Carrie Giles, *op.cit.*, p. 354.

⁶⁵ Document 13-13-1: In the Archives of the *Fédération des Sociétés de Langue Française de la Nouvelle Eglise*, Lausanne.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

business, her more than a dozen simultaneous law suits,⁶⁷ her insufferably bad temper, all prevented her from carrying on the beautiful work that she herself had begun.

And there were additional reasons for the decline of the society. Prior to Décembre's departure, a new group formed in Paris which was affiliated with the General Church of the New Jerusalem, that is to say, the branch representing the Academy position in the United States. This branch considers Swedenborg's Writings to be the Third Testament and has an organized priesthood. Its members make it a point of honor to closely adhere to the principles stated by the Swedish revelator in his work *Conjugal Love*. By this time Edmond Chevrier, had already denounced this schism in the New Church in his *Histoire abrégée*.⁶⁸ Some members of these two groups, especially the Hussenet family, met together in Paris, as the *Eglise de l'Avenir* tells us, with no evidence of hostility.⁶⁹ In contrast, the members of the General Church had quite a different attitude, as may be found in an extract from the *Nouvelle Jérusalem*, a quarterly journal of the new branch that was published in Brussels:

Paris.—It is very important to inform our brethren that the New Church Society in Paris affiliated with *The General Church of the New Jerusalem* was recognized as an educational association and subject to the laws of the French government on September 27, 1911. I can add a further piece of information that is not insignificant. According to the Director of Ecclesiastical Affairs, any other association seeking the same end as ours is to join our section and not pursue a different path.

F. Hussenet

Minister of the New Church in Paris⁷⁰

⁶⁷ In the document mentioned in Note 65), F.C. Mercanton speaks about "twelve ongoing lawsuits," but in the document 13/1-I-E, he says "17 lawsuits."

⁶⁸ *Histoire abrégée*, p. 170.

⁶⁹ *L'Eglise de l'Avenir*, Sixième Année, No. 67-68, pp. 323-324.

⁷⁰ *La Nouvelle Jérusalem*, Brussels, 1923, No. 3, p. 180.

Ferdinand Hussenet, who had parted company with the society of the temple on the Rue Thouin even before Décembre's resignation, was ordained as a pastor in the second degree by Bishop William F. Pendleton of The General Church of the New Jerusalem in the United States on October 10, 1908. In 1911, Hussenet requested and obtained for his group of about twenty-five members, registration in the *Journal Officiel* as the educational association called the "Section Française du Deuxième Avènement de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ ou Nouvelle Jérusalem," with its headquarters at 100 rue Saint-Lazare in Paris. Now that the temple on rue Thouin had been sold,⁷¹ Hussenet's group was the only one left to hold public meetings in Paris.

Mme. Humann was still living at this time and after the war she found a zealous leader for the group in the person of R. Flon. Flon later left Paris and the "Mission Chauncey Giles de la Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne" (the official name of the group) to settle down in l'Eguille in lower Charente, where he led a life both as a school teacher and as a pastor of a small New Church group.

Ferdinand Hussenet gave a series of public lectures in the Salle des Sociétés Savantes after having relocated services of worship to 84 Lavenue de Breteuil (entrance 7, rue Barthélémy). In Lausanne, a *Fédération des Sociétés et des membres de langue française de la Nouvelle Eglise*⁷² was founded with Pastor Gustave Regamey as its chairman. The Federation, whose aim was to maintain the unity of the New Church in the countries concerned, also organized lectures in a room at the address mentioned above. Gustave Regamey reports that there had been up to eighty people in attendance, even though Ferdinand Hussenet was giving a lecture in another room of the same building. I must add that this deliberate competition had been preceded by a genuine attempt to unite the two Swedenborgian groups in Paris. Regamey, after having entered into correspondence with Hussenet, met with him both in Paris and in Lausanne and entered into an agree-

⁷¹The information about the two main New Church groups in Paris comes from a dossier that Jean-François Mayer, a student in the History of Religion at the University of Lyon, was kind enough to send me while he was in charge of making a catalogue of the New Church archives in Lausanne.

⁷²In 1920, according to the *Nouvelle Jérusalem*, Brussels, 1923, No. 4, p. 223.

ment with him. Hussenet was to take direction of the two unified groups with the promise that he would present Swedenborg's Writings as an illustration of the Word of God, and not as a third testament. The one absolute condition of this re-unification was the exclusion of Mme. Humann from the Steering Committee.

If, however, the merging of a group adhering to the General Convention with another one affiliated with The Academy seemed feasible in Lausanne and in Paris, it did not seem to be the case in Bryn Athyn, the international center of The General Church of the New Jerusalem. Ferdinand Hussenet and his colleague in Brussels, M. Letenre, were called to Bryn Athyn in the summer of 1920 and from that time on any collaboration between the two groups proved to be impossible. Gustave Regamey had certainly misunderstood Hussenet in believing that Hussenet was willing to disregard the differences between the General Convention and The General Church for the sake of unity.

Thus the Federation, to which Hussenet's group never belonged, failed in its attempt to bring about a re-unification. Another effort, undertaken by the Swedenborgian Henry de Geymuller of Strasbourg to publish a monthly periodical entitled *Pro Unitate* from his sanitorium in the Château d'OEx where he was being treated for tuberculosis, proved to be equally unsuccessful.

Ferdinand Hussenet continued to lead his small General Church group until his death in 1933. Fifteen months afterwards, the Reverend E.E. Jungerich took over until the war, followed by Louis Lucas, whose appointment was made official in 1946. After his death in 1954 there seems to have been a hiatus in the activities of the group until 1961, when Maurice de Chazal, officially a pastor in the British General Conference, baptized no less than twenty-one people including the entire Nicolier family. At the end of the 1960s, Maurice de Chazal retired to South Africa and the Reverends Frank and Donald Rose came periodically to conduct services in Paris. I attended one of these myself and was surprised to find members of the American Convention in attendance. On the other hand I should add that when Dennis Duckworth, the president of the British Conference presided at the services, some General Church people were present, too. Thus, the unity sought in vain some forty years before, was finally achieved, even though it only lasted for the duration of the worship services.

Before embarking on a much more important re-unification, the merging of the two groups under the direction of the protestant Pastor Claude Bruley in 1968, we must go back to the 1920s to see evolution of Mme. Humann's society. Mme. Humann died in 1923 and was buried by Gustave Regamey of the Federation assisted by F.C. Mercanton. Mercanton seems to have been primarily an administrator of Mme. Humann's society. Mme. Humann had long since bequeathed her entire fortune to the American Convention, including the temple on rue Thouin and the villa in Meudon-Bellevue. Before she could sell her home on the rue Thouin she had to receive the authorization of the American Convention. Miss Soulier, a wealthy French-American woman, had left Mme. Humann her entire fortune of two million francs of which she had been only able to draw twenty-five percent following several years of legal action. From all this we can see that Mme. Humann's affairs were rather complicated. Mercanton was the one in charge of straightening them out within the framework of an organization specifically created for this purpose, the Paris-Trust. Mercanton began by attempting to buy back the temple on rue Thouin. When he discovered that the tenant held a lease that extended for several years, he sold the temple, which had since become a movie theater, to an Armenian company. However, after the death of Mme. Humann's son, he was able to re-purchase the Humann's villa in Meudon-Bellevue.

An organization that turned out to have an even greater role than the Paris-Trust was the *Société de la Nouvelle Eglise Paris-Province* founded in May 1923 by about twenty people, one of whom was Paul Flon, son of the previously mentioned R. Flon, a man who was to play a major part in the history of French Swedenborgianism for the next fifty years. In 1925, Maurice de Chazal settled down in Paris in order to preside at the services in the capital while Mercanton took charge of bringing together members scattered throughout the provinces and continued to manage the affairs of the society. Three years later, de Chazal was called to serve in the ministry of the New Church in Mauritius founded by an ancestor bearing the same name and who had been Le Boys des Guays' benefactor. Norman Mayer replaced de Chazal and served continuously until his death in February 1956, except for the period during the German occupation in World War II when the villa in Meudon-Bellevue was requisitioned and some boxes of books were burned.

In 1956, the group changed its name to the *Société française de la Nouvelle Eglise* similar to the change effected by Hussenet's group in 1935 when it became *Société Française de l'Eglise Générale de la Nouvelle Jérusalem*. In 1968, Claude Bruley, a former pastor in the Reformed Church, successfully united the two groups into one society and settled in the villa in Meudon-Bellevue, where a service was held every other Sunday, preceding a meeting of the Cercle Swedenborg, an organization which sponsored educational activities of broader interest.

Unfortunately, in 1975, there was a new schism that led to the formation of a small group who had felt that Bruley's teachings were not only too general but were also not sufficiently faithful to the doctrines revealed by Emanuel Swedenborg. This group met with M. Paul Sévin, a lay preacher in Clamart until 1978 when Alain Nicolier returned from Bryn Athyn where he had been ordained as a pastor in the General Church and founded a group called the Nouveau Christianisme. Reverend Nicolier publishes a monthly newsletter called *Nouvelle Terre*.

About this same time, Claude Bruley sold the villa in Meudon-Bellevue and founded the *Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne de la Presle*, a center for teaching seminars and for retreats not necessarily devoted to the study of New Church doctrines, but having a broader religious orientation. Swedenborg's name was not mentioned in all the programs of the NEC in Presle, located in the center of France not very far from Saint-Amand-Mont-Rond. And for this the members of his former congregation in Paris reproached him. On the other hand, Claude Bruley had support from the American Convention for his propaganda in favor of the New Church.

So once again, one hundred and fifty years after the founding of the society in Saint-Amand-Mont-Rond, the center of French Swedenborgianism was no longer in Paris, but in the center of France.

Unfortunately the success of the NEC lasted only a few years.⁷³ Claude Bruley was obliged to sell his small castle and settle down in the South of France. After some years stay in Bryn Athyn, Nicolier came back to Bourgignon-Meursanges, continuing the publication of his *Nouvelle Terre*,

⁷³ The recent installation of a New Church pastor (Patrick Duvivier) in the South of France (Ipailla 65485 Saorge) with his small group will not be able to replace Claude Bruley's ambitious undertaking, but it bears witness of the ongoing presence of the New Church in the French provinces.

which seems to be the main New Church activity in today's Paris. There are about 12 members of the *Nouveau Christianisme*, and about as many in the *Cercle Swedenborg*.

Another peculiar manifestation of Swedenborgian inspiration in Paris is the creation by Francis P. Batt, alias Héphaïstos, at the University of Paris 8, of a "church" called *Nova Domini Ecclesia quæ est Nova Hierosolyma* associating Swedenborg's New Church with Dionysian teachings given at the University during the Middle Ages, and calling Swedenborg the "Saint Dionysus of our epoch." Of course, this "church" reminds us above all of the "Hague group" initiated by Theodore Pitcairn during his stay at the Château des Plaignes, Grez-sur-Loing, close to Fontainebleau, during the thirties where he organized New Church worship and studies, also serving as the minister of the Thoury-Ferrattes (Department of Seine-et-Marne) parish and as a member of the Steering Committee of the General Church in Paris. But the New Church group in Grez-sur-Loing uniting mainly painters of different nationalities and a few Frenchmen worked only in English. Anyhow, once more, Swedenborgianism on French soil proved to be of greater importance internationally than in France.⁷⁴

⁷⁴This information on Theodore Pitcairn and the origin of the *Nova Domini Ecclesia quæ est Nova Hierosolyma* was given to me by Olle Hjern, Stockholm.

(To be continued)

